

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

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NO. 11.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

BRIEF SKETCHES. No. V.

It must not be supposed that the immense army of the crusade, was composed altogether of men who wished well to the cause of the christian religion; No! this undisciplined mob was made up of an ambitious nobility, of malefactors, and of men whose highest wishes were those of plunder and devastation; following this assemblage, was a band disciplined, and conducted by leaders whose aim was victory, and who valued death, far more than safety. Of the fortune of this, and the subsequent armies raised for the same purposes, we design to give an account hereafter, suffice it now, to say that they did not finally succeed in retaining their conquests.

Between the period when the supremacy of the Pope was acknowledged, and the reformation by Luther, many curious doctrines were incorporated with christianity. In the eleventh century, the people prostrated themselves when the *host* was elevated; and the Lord's supper was considered propitiatory.—The Saviour was believed to be present and to be then offered up anew to God for the sins of the world; this belief required not explanation, it was a *mystery*, and this name covered it, as it has many other absurdities, from the investigation of mankind.

The doctrine of purgatory was still worse;—it was held up, that as some offences are not deserving of eternal punishment, there must be an intermediate state of punishment after death, which is *purgatory*. This was the most profitable of all the plans of priestcraft; masses and prayers were purchased for the washing away the purgatorial punishment of departed friends, and many on the death bed, willed immense estates, which they could no longer enjoy, to the church, that masses might be performed by her for the good of their souls.

It was an opinion generally prevalent, that the church had a right to relax the penances submitted to, for the

purpose of washing away sins, and it was easy to extend this, so far, as to believe that the church could also allow certain sins to be committed without inflicting penance; permission to this effect was granted in writing, which document was called an *Indulgence*; even this came to be extended; the remission of penance, gave way to the *remission of sins*, and with this indulgence, which cost much, the possessor might trample on every tie that dignifies the human character, and commit every crime that blackens the catalogue of depravity; no human punishment could reach the criminal, no civil power could prevent the perpetration of the deed, even the means by which priests had tyrannized over the minds of men for many ages, here were subsidized, for the terrors of a purgatory faded from the view, and the day of judgment was divested of its horrors, nay, Hell itself could not inflict any punishment on the villain, who was sufficiently able to purchase from the *escrutoire* of priestcraft, the *indulgence* to sin a certain term, or to commit a certain act, for it was firmly believed that the church possessed "an immense treasure of merit composed of the pious deeds and virtuous actions, which the saints have performed, beyond what is necessary, for their own salvation, and which are therefore applicable to the benefit of others," and that a part might be assigned to men, "suitable to their respective guilt, and sufficient to deliver them from the punishment due to their crimes."

These indulgences raised the revenues of the church, and her sons were enabled to squander in debauchery the money thus obtained from the simple: rioting in wickedness, these men, a disgrace to humanity, proclaimed forgiveness of sins, past, present, and to come, and received in lieu, the only consistent attributes of priestcraft, and its constant companion, *money*, and the love of it.

John Tetzel, a Dominican friar, sold

them in Germany, in 1517, their effects were so deleterious to the morals of the lower class, and so subversive of the designs of government, that they roused the attention of the virtuous, and drew forth talents to oppose them, that would otherwise have slumbered in the cell of a monastery. A monk by accident found a copy of the New Testament, it was new to him, and he perused it with eagerness and enthusiasm, he saw at once that the contrast between its principles and those of the christians of his day, was awfully humiliating, he compared the humble followers of Jesus, who was poor, and destitute, of the things of this world, with the sovereign Pontiff who ruled nations, and caused a world to bow before the dogma of his infallibility.—This monk was Martin Luther, a man whose talents were transcendent, whose piety was undisputed; like most great men, he sprung from the humblest extraction, and mounted the pinnacle of immortal fame, by his courage and undaunted devotion.

Having resolved to preach Christ to the people, he called on them to put no trust in the pardons of men, to pay no lucre for admission to the abodes of their Father in heaven, he exhorted them to come without money, and without price, and preached as salvation's only condition, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," this simple language, sunk to the very souls of his hearers, it spread like the oil, and produced an exuberant harvest, yet to this alone we must not ascribe its increase, the march of the human mind had already commenced, men began to read, and woe to bigotry, they had dared to *reason*, they looked for argument, and authority in religious, as well as other matters, and went so far as to examine the respect due to the authority.

Ulric Zuinglius, in Switzerland, rose with a spirit in no wise inferior to Luther's. The elector of Saxony, and many of the Prussian princes patronized the cause, and with others, entered

their *protest* against the edict of Worms, which anathematized Luther. This gave the reformers the name of *Protestants*.

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

PRAYER.

It is frequently asserted by the adherents to the doctrine of eternal damnation, by way of evasion, that the bible nowhere commands us to pray for the salvation of all men, in a special manner; but that we may pray that they may possess "godliness and honesty," and be temporally blest; or, even be punished for their sins, like David who prayed for the destruction of his enemies, without praying for their salvation. We readily admit that we are not commanded to pray that all men may be saved, in so many words, but, if we examine 1 Tim. ii. 1—4, we shall find that the apostle's exhortation amounts to it. He begins thus, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all," (i. e. it is of the first importance that) "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men;" (and that no mistake should arise, or any one class deem themselves exempted, he descends to particulars and observes,) "For kings and for ALL that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." This then is the object to be obtained, viz. the "godliness and honesty" of ALL men; and this for the reason immediately given; "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." Here it is observable, that 'it is good and acceptable in the sight of God,' that all men should possess godliness and honesty, and consequently peace and happiness. Now in praying that all men may possess "godliness and honesty," and all the blessings resulting therefrom, do not we pray for the salvation of all men? And the reason why these things are 'good and acceptable' is because God "will have ALL MEN to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Now, if it were not good that all men should possess "godliness and honesty," would God will their salvation? And, if it were not good that all men should be saved, would he exhort us to pray that they may "lead quiet, and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty?"

Why should he desire the *godliness* of those that his wisdom informed him, antecedent to their existence, would be endlessly wretched; or his purposes predoomed to such a state? Would it not be desiring the salvation of those who were either, by his knowledge, or decree, from eternity, devoted to destruction, and consequently wishing that this unbeginning knowledge and purpose, that seals their everlasting doom were revoked, or destroyed? In fine, if God did not know and decree that all men shall be saved, are not his wisdom and purpose at variance with his volition? But further, should it please the Almighty to grant the petitions of those who pray that all men "may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty," will not all be saved? Will a man of "godliness and honesty" ever be lost? Or, has he commanded us to pray for that which he never will grant, and is he so capricious as to sport with the feelings, and tantalize the hearts of his own dependent offspring? If the Almighty be sincere, is not this prayer given by the apostle tantamount to a supplication for the salvation of all men? Is there an example on sacred record that we should pray that all men may become christians? If so, we pray for their salvation.—Are we to pray that all men may be made holy, "and perfect as God is perfect?" By so doing, we pray for their salvation; for holiness of heart, and godliness of life and conversation, are inseparably connected with happiness, salvation and eternal life. The latter follows the former as certain as effect follows cause. And yet we are informed, that St. Paul does not exhort us to pray that all may be saved, but only that they may "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Now in order that God should not be mocked by the hypocritical forms of prayer, and "will worship" of men, in "drawing nigh unto him with their lips while their hearts are far from him," (i. e. in praying that all men may possess this 'godliness and honesty' while they sanguinely believe, or profess to believe, that the greater part of mankind will be destitute of them for ever)—I say, in order to prevent this solemn duplicity, he adds, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting." The true mean-

ing of this last text is, that we should comply with the apostle's exhortation, fully believing that God will answer our requests in his own due time to the joy of our hearts. These blessings we are warranted to expect for ourselves and all mankind, if we pray in faith not doubting. For the faithful "effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." But if any are reprobated to interminable torments, of what avail are all the prayers of the righteous for them? They never will save one such from the "pains of damnation."

May these petitions, indited by the great apostle of the Gentiles, be borne upon the wings of faith from consecrated hearts to the throne of grace, and bring down the promised blessings upon all mankind, that that period may come, predicted by the forerunner of our Lord, when "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." H****.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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CEREMONIES IN RELIGION.

It has become as much a practice, in modern times, to decry all ceremonies in religion, as it was formerly, to load and disfigure it with a multitude of useless forms and observances, to which a degree of veneration the most superstitious was paid.—By an excess on either side, I humbly conceive that the interests of religion are prejudiced.

The professors of christianity, it is true, have few ceremonies, indispensably enjoined upon them by the founder of their religion, yet it becomes a question whether we do right in discarding, or, what amounts to nearly the same thing, underating the importance of the few which are enjoined—which have been solemnly instituted by the great head of our religion—which were followed by the apostles, and have continued to be observed in almost every age of the church, and venerated by almost every sect professing the blessed name of Jesus.

The abuse of ceremonies by the designing, and the misconception of them by the ignorant, are among the principal reasons which are brought forward by those who would either entirely divest the public worship of them, or at least, render them a mere matter of form, to be either coldly and hastily

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performed, or entirely left undone, according to the inclination or caprice of "the crowd who come up to the temple to worship."

A religion entirely divested of ceremony, where the spirit of the worshipper mounts immediately to the throne of heaven and communes with its God in devotion, abstracted from aught earthly or corrupt, is certainly the most grand and sublime, and most worthy of the majesty of our heavenly Father, but unfortunately, such worship is too abstracted, too spiritual, too highly exalted for the majority of those who bow the knee, and the heart, and that most sincerely too, at the altar of their God.—Their minds, unaccustomed to dwell on immaterial objects, require a coarser medium to fix, and, as it were, embody their devotions, and, for this purpose ceremonies were, I presume, originally established; and as long as they are viewed only as a type or memorial of what has taken place or is now going on within us, they are not only innocent, but in the highest degree necessary, and, instead of being prejudicial, are salutary, to the true interest of religion; instead of exiling God from the heart, and establishing themselves in his place, they bring him near to the worshipper, and recal frequently to his mind, the sacrament or obligation into which he, as a christian, has most solemnly entered, and upon the due performance of which depends his happiness.

If it be urged that the use of ceremonies is apt to degenerate into a species of Idolatry, I reply that a worship entirely divested of them, most generally ends either in entire indifference, or in a bold and bigotted fanaticism.

The ceremonies, the observance of which I would most particularly cherish in the church, are the baptism of adults, and the celebration of the Lord's supper.—The one being a beautiful type of the washing away of our sins in "the fountain of living waters." The other, an important memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of the interest we all have therein.

I would not, however, be understood to place any intrinsic importance upon these ceremonies, in relation to our eternal salvation; I view them only like the assembling of ourselves together for the public worship of God, as a

means of confirming our faith, and cultivating religious feelings;—as a means of bringing our hearts to God; and every thing that will aid in effecting this important object, must I think, be of sufficient importance, to demand the attention of the followers of Christ. Q

THE CHRISTIAN.

The Christian possesses a great advantage in the contemplation of nature. He beholds unity in the midst of variety. He looks around on the changing scenery, and in every leaf of the forest, every blade of grass, every hill, every valley, and every cloud of heaven, he discovers the traces of *divine benevolence*. Creation is but a field spread before him for an infinitely varied display of *love*. This is the harmonizing principle which reduces to unity and simplicity the vast diversity of nature; this is the perfection of the universe. It clothes in moral glory every object we contemplate. The christian may be said to hear, "the music of the spheres."—He hears suns and planets joining their melody in praise to their benignant Creator. *His* ear, and his alone, is tuned to this heavenly harmony—His very soul is love.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, October 14, 1820.

Philada. Oct. 2, 1820.

MR. EDITOR,

In the Messenger No. 8, published last Saturday, the observation, on the incapacity of Reason unaided by Revelation, to discover the existence and attributes of God, seem to be misconstrued into a degradation of Reason. Nothing could be farther from the intention of the writer, or of his observations. The object was to assign to *Reason* its proper office in that respect.—That of examining and judging of the discoveries of Revelation, which Reason, unaided by Revelation, is totally incapable of discovering.

It is there hinted, "There is, we believe, no unprejudiced mind, who will examine, with attention, the subject, but will admit, that the existence of

God, and some of his attributes are discoverable by reason. It is impossible for a reflecting mind, to look abroad upon creation, and perceive how well every thing in the natural world is adapted to its end, and not of itself come to the conclusion, that they owe their origin to some great being, mighty in wisdom and power.

It may properly be asked, where shall such unprejudiced and reflecting mind, totally ignorant of any traditional, or other knowledge, derived from revelation be found? Among men acquainted in any way with revelation, their reason will indeed readily draw such conclusions; but without some such previous information, their reason must remain entirely without any data which could lead them even to conjecture any such things. They might wonder at what they saw; but could go no farther.

The American Indians, have traditions respecting the Great Spirit which they say they learned from their ancestors, and they from theirs, &c. but although these traditions have been handed down for many ages, they never pretend that they or their ancestors discovered these by their own reason. It was impossible for them to possess any such ideas, unless they were derived from revelation. All the advocates for the power of reason, in discovering the existence and attributes of God, are brought forward by men who have had some knowledge of revelation, whether Christians or Deists, and not one of them has produced a single rational argument which was not derived from revelation. Some of them have even attempted proofs of such powers of reason, from the scriptures themselves.

The second statement, refers to a reflecting mind, inferring a *Creator* from viewing the *works of creation*. That is very easily done by those who previously know that God is the creator, and where is the man who has not been taught that, before he could reason much on the subject? But to prove the power of reason, unaided by revelation, to make these discoveries, we must find a reasoning man (if such can be found) who has never had opportunity of hearing a single word of information, or of supposition or tradition, respecting these things. Let him view the

heavens, the earth with its seas, rivers, mountains, rocks, &c. and he might well wonder at them, for they are wonderful; but as they have been as they now are, as long as he can remember, or learn from the accounts of those who have been before him. The idea of their ever having been created, could not enter his mind. From their well known stability he would rather conclude that they had always existed, with such variations, from time to time, as he may have observed: It will not serve the purpose, to say that seeing a house, leads to infer a builder, or seeing a watch, leads to infer a watch-maker. The inference is easy, because every man grown to maturity, well knows that men build some kind of huts or houses, and make some kind of mechanism. But did ever any man see the heavens, and the earth made, or even a mountain, a rock or a sea? As these infinitely exceed any power of which he can have any conception, what other conclusion can he draw, unaided, by any better information, than that they were always so?

Reason is one of the precious gifts of God to men; without reason, revelation could be of no use to mankind; without reason, man would be inferior to the beasts; for they all have their suitable share of reason. Reason is of inestimable value to man; but it has its proper sphere of action. Let not the folly of man, and his pride and self conceit, arrogate to reason the peculiar province of revelation. It is from revelation alone that the primary knowledge of the existence of God, his attributes, his designs, will, and works, can be possibly obtained. That knowledge once obtained, reason has an ample field of action, and readily admits the truth of what without that aid, reason could not possibly discover.

It is no new thing for vain men professing themselves wise, to become fools. But it would be well enough for those who contend for this superior power of reason, to make discoveries of spiritual things, (for surely the existence and attributes of God are spiritual things,) to give us a specimen of their reasoning process, by which these wonderful discoveries are made; (but no aid from revelation must be admitted in the process) in order that we may receive some important instruction. Until this

is done, we must remain under the influence of what is styled prejudice, and want of reflection; for in reality those who think with the writer, are ignorant of any other source of original information respecting the existence, character, purposes, will and works of God, than his own divine revelation. T.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

"The shew of their countenance doth witness against them." Isaiah iii. 19.

The "human face divine," affords naturally a sure index to the mind. It is susceptible of all the various changes which depend upon passion and feeling, and readily imparts to the attentive observer, the affections which exhilarate or depress our nature. The round smooth face of the wealthy citizen, gives assurance of ease and comfort; while the jaundiced, thin visage, seamed and furrowed by care, by disappointment, or intense thought, sufficiently marks the unfortunate, the misanthropic, or the studious. That man must indeed be capable of "treason, stratagem and spoil," who has so far mastered the natural connection between thought, or feeling, and muscular emotion, as to beam pleasure and happiness from his countenance when his body or mind, are suffering excruciating pangs, or to dim the sunshine of his eye when his heart is exulting and rioting in bliss. It is an acquirement which can only subserve the purpose of the vicious, whose "doings are against the Lord," and cannot certainly be envied or imitated by the virtuous.

The peaceful religion of our Saviour, promises to its followers, rest from labour,—safety from trouble, and exemption from distress:—It bequeaths to them happiness without alloy, the peace of heaven and calmness of an approving conscience. The "shew of their countenance," surely should be nothing but smiling benignity interrupted, if at all, only by the light of gladness and rejoicing. It is not here we are to look for duplicity, for their faces should be as transcripts of their minds. Yet it does not require eminent skill in physiognomy to discern in the countenances of many who are accounted firm in faith; who are constant in devotion, and

exemplary in conduct; the workings of a mind, but ill at ease. To these I conceive my discourse directed, and why are my fellow labourers disturbed within? Are those glad tidings which it has pleased our father to reveal through his beloved Son, calculated to excite doubt or arouse fear? Then indeed as they bring no healing to you, although they cry "peace! peace! there is no peace," for "the shew of your countenance doth witness against them;" but let us be careful lest we ascribe to the gospel, that which arises only from the devices of man. Have you listened to the airy visions of your imagination—the flattering hopes of your pride? Have you not clung to the superstitious terrors of your childhood? Have you not praised your God for his mercy and goodness, and yet trembled under your teachers denunciation of his vindictive wrath, through the dim succession of ages yet unborn? Beloved! "the shew of your countenance doth witness against ye." Seek then again those treasures which defy corrosion—read and be instructed. Let the "rock of salvation" be the basis of your hopes, and an approving conscience, the goal of your endeavours. Seek comfort in the cheering proclamation of pardon, forgiveness and universal restoration, and your minds will experience a resurrection as glorious, and as wonderful, as that which awaits us all hereafter. Then indeed shall you behold the unhappiness from which you were rescued and with me proclaim to erring men the cruelty and folly which "doth witness against the doctrines of their own hands." G

QUERY.

If the impartiality of the divine being is manifested in the Calvinistic creed, which teaches us that God, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, and reprobated others, who are no more sinful than they, to a state of endless misery, we ask whether this does not say, that, if the Creator had graciously predestinated all men to glorify him in a state of holiness and happiness, he would then have manifested himself to be a most partial Being?

PRINTING

Neatly executed at this Office.